

Patents

The Collection for All Reasons

Business • Culture • Education • History • Innovation • Law • Research • Science • Technology

Why a Patent Collection?

The U.S. patent search file spans over 210 years and consists of more than 7 million documents. From corn planters to cloning methods, it tells the story of science and technology since 1790. But it also bears witness to the evolution of society. From fashion to fusion, nutrition to nanotechnology, education to entertainment, patents document every aspect of life. As such, patent history mirrors that of humanity; patent trends reflect the rise and ebb of society's every changing interests, habits, fads and foibles.

There is much more to a patent collection than the obvious connection to inventions and technology. No other collection offers so much to so many and satisfies such a variety of information needs. The U.S. patent search file has been described as the largest collection of organized technical information in the world. Patent documents are frequently cited as the first sources of information on new technologies.

A Powerful Tool

► Comprehensive

With over 7 million patent documents, the U.S. patent search file is the most complete and compact collection of technological information in the world.

► Unique

Patent documents contain technical information not published elsewhere.

► Accessible

This priceless repository of information is freely accessible to the public on the web site of the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office and in its search facilities in Alexandria, Virginia and at Patent and Trademark Depository Libraries located around the country.

► Multipurpose

Beyond research and development, patent document collections are valuable planning and forecasting tools as well as legal, educational and scholarly resources.

With Many Uses

As a result, no other collection answers the needs as diversified as those of engineers, historians, lawyers, social scientists, business and industry, educators, students of all ages, government agencies, inventors, entrepreneurs and the general public.

► Patentability Searches

Conduct a preliminary patent search to assess the novelty of an invention.

► Research and Development

Evaluate the state of the art of a technology, develop new-or improve upon existing-products and processes.

► Technical Solutions

Solve specific problems, locate sources of expertise and identify alternate technology.

► Economic Trends

Survey markets, monitor and forecast activities of competitors or industries.

► Financial Risk

Avoid duplicating costly research; judge an alleged innovation prior to venturing capital.

► Legal Status

Conduct infringement or opposition proceedings; identify licensing opportunities.

► Historical Data

Study a time period, the history of technology and social changes.

► Marketing Resources

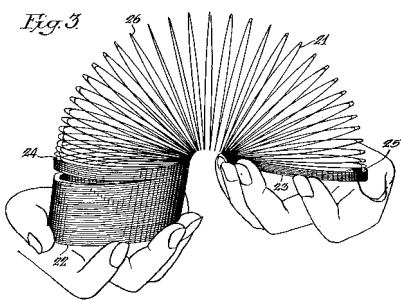
Compile mailing lists and databases; locate the addresses of inventors and manufacturers.

► Genealogical Research

Research and document family ancestors and accomplishments.

► General Information

Satisfy lifelong learning and curiosity.



The patent for the Slinky[®] spring toy, No. 2,145,012, represents just one of thousands of popular toys invented during the 20th century.

Who Uses Patent Information?

- Independent inventors.
- Businesses and industries.
- Industrial designers and professional artists.
- Scientists and researchers.
- Educators and students.
- Legal professionals, e.g. patent attorneys and agents.
- Professional patent searchers and paralegals.
- Entrepreneurs.
- Commercial database producers.
- Government agencies, particularly departments involved in economic planning and development, industrial property activities or licensing.
- Librarians and technical library administrators.
- Historians, social scientists and other scholars.
- Collectors and antiquarians.
- Journalists.
- General public.

Patent Facts

- The first U.S. patent was issued on July 31, 1790 to Samuel Hopkins of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
- In 1790, the U.S. issued just three patents. In 2004, the U.S. issued 187,170 patents.
- The U.S. has issued over 7 million patents since 1790.
- The practice of numbering patents began in 1836. Patent No. 1 was issued to Senator John Ruggles of Thomaston, Maine on July 13, 1836.
- The three most common types of patents are utility, design and plant.
- The four criteria for patents are novelty, usefulness, unobviousness and full disclosure.

For more information, contact:

Patent and Trademark

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